

# Intercession-The Provision of God in the Midst of Suffering

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“He has rescued us from terrifying encounters with death. And now we fasten our hopes on him to continue to deliver us from death yet again, *as you labor together with us through prayer*. Because there are so many interceding for us, our deliverance will cause even more people to give thanks to God. *What a gift of mercy surrounds us because of your prayers!*” -2 Cor. 1:10–11 (The Passion Translation)

- I. **God delivers us from demonic assault** -In the above passage Paul is referring specifically to demonic assault against the gospel being preached and taking root in what is now western Turkey (the former Roman province of Asia). The devil’s resistance to God’s purposes through Paul were expressed not only in the realm of the Spirit, but also through the actions of unbelieving men and women.
  - A. Just as with the apostle Paul and his ministry team, we also will experience seasons of demonic assault against the purposes of God in our lives. This assault may be realized primarily through spiritual manifestations (heightened anxiety, fear, deception, discouragement, intimidation from spiritual powers etc.) or through the movement of our circumstances (money, key relationships, health, unrighteous governmental laws and policies) or through the words and actions of people, both friends and enemies (Mt.16:23)(1 Cor.16:9).

“But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are [a stumbling block] to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’” -Mt.16:23

“For a great and effective door has opened to me, and *there are many adversaries.*” -1 Cor.16:9

## II. We experience sufferings as part of our commitment to follow Christ.

“And just as we experience the abundance of Christ’s own sufferings<sup>1</sup>, even more of God’s comfort will cascade upon us through our union with Christ.” -2 Cor.1:5 (The Passion Translation)

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<sup>1</sup> That is, “*The sufferings we endure because of faithfully following Christ.*”

- A. Sufferings can take many forms. One may experience beatings and imprisonment for Christ's sake. Another may experience the loss of family and friendships, loneliness, missed or lost financial opportunities, ill health, rejection, or slander.
- B. Sufferings can even take the form of our enduring the death of our fleshly nature as we must forgive those who wound us, bless those who curse us and give to those who mistreat us. All of these things are a normal part of the way that God disciplines, or matures, us.
- C. Jesus was familiar with all of these things. This was part of His becoming like us in our humanity (Heb.2:17,18, 4:15, 5:8).

“For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.”  
-Heb.2:18

“Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.” -Heb.5:8

- III. **The revelation of the God who comforts** (2 Cor.1:3) -God cares greatly about our suffering. Unlike the mythical God's of ancient Greece and Rome worshiped during Paul's day, our God is tender drawing near to those that are broken hearted (Ps.34:18). He is intimately acquainted in the suffering of people.

“The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.” -  
Ps.34:18

- A. God takes the occasion of human suffering to reveal His nature. He is *the* Father of mercies and the God of all comfort (2 Cor.1:3).
- B. God brings us into His own story, the story of God who became a man, and endured great suffering all for the sake of love. Both our suffering and His comfort join us closely to His experience while on the earth. Even our suffering works for our good.
- C. Many view God as something of a stoic teacher, emotionless and only looking to *teach us a lesson* through pain and difficulty. While it is true that God will use the occasion of our suffering to help us grow in our understanding, He is filled with emotion and tenderness when we hurt.

**IV. Able to comfort others** -God uses our sufferings and our healing to minister to others the way that He has ministered to us. This is part of our becoming like Him (Rom.8:29; 1 Jn.3:2). As we are comforted and healed, we are made able to love and serve others in the same way as Christ has served us. He has not only ministered to us in our need, but He has entered into the suffering of mankind.

“He always comes alongside us to comfort us in every suffering so that we can come alongside those who are in any painful trial. We can bring them this same comfort that God has poured out upon us. And just as we experience the abundance of Christ’s own sufferings, even more of God’s comfort will cascade upon us through our union with Christ.” -2 Cor.1:4-5

**V. Paul links the deliverance of God in spiritual warfare to the prayers of the saints for him** (1 Cor.2:10-11). The prayers of the saints increased the release of His power and accelerated spiritual breakthrough. If this were a math formula, we might simplify it this way. More prayer = More power.

A. God desires for us to partner with Him as He leads and governs the earth. He has given us backstage access so to speak to the throne of His power. He says, *“If you will pray, I will release My power and my love.”*